

For immediate release
August 19, 2005

SAN PEDRO RIVER RECORDS ZERO FLOW FOR THE FIRST TIME IN RECORDED HISTORY; DATA TO BE PRESENTED AT AUGUST 30 PUBLIC MEETING

The Southeast Arizona Citizens' Forum (SACF) of the United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) will conduct a public meeting on Tuesday, August 30, 4:00 - 6:00 p.m., in the Bisbee City Council Chambers, 118 Arizona Street in Bisbee, Arizona. The purpose of the forum is to facilitate the exchange of information between the USIBWC and members of the public about Commission activities in Santa Cruz and Cochise Counties, Arizona.

Staff from the U.S. Geological Survey in Tucson will discuss concerns over low flow in the San Pedro River. For the first time on record, zero flow was observed in the San Pedro River at the Charleston gaging station. The earliest record at the Charleston gage began in 1904 and data have been collected continuously since about 1935. Within the period of record, flow has been perennial until July 6, 2005; that evening, the first recorded cessation of flow occurred at the Charleston gage. The location of the gage makes it particularly useful for observing conditions in the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area.

Several factors may contribute to this no-flow occurrence, including pumping from the regional groundwater system, changes in the riparian system, changes in climate, and changes in storm runoff. Some of the data that are available to help understand the reason for the no-flow event will be presented.

The meeting will also address concerns about riparian vegetation in the Santa Cruz River. Ann Phillips, President of the Friends of the Santa Cruz River, will discuss recent stress and die-off of riparian trees. Aerial photography conducted in June 2005 over the upper Santa Cruz River in Santa Cruz County, Arizona showed an alarming pattern of stress and die-off in trees along the river channel. A group of concerned Santa Cruz County

citizens, government agencies, businesses, and nonprofit groups has been meeting to look at possible causes. A second aerial flight is planned to see if the recent monsoon rains have revived any of the stressed trees. Information is being sought on the condition of riparian trees in other Arizona river valleys to see if this is a regional problem. A number of possible causes are being investigated including Texas root rot, insect damage, drought, groundwater pumping, and nutrient levels in effluent.

In other business, John Hays, Floodplain Coordinator for Santa Cruz County, will provide a briefing on the response to a sulfuric acid spill that affected the Santa Cruz River. The spill occurred in Mexico on August 11 after a train with tanker cars of sulfuric acid derailed near the river. The Nogales Sister City Emergency Response and Preparedness Plan was activated to protect the public and drinking water supplies.

The Citizens' Forum will also welcome two new board members who were recently appointed by the USIBWC to fill the vacancies of board members whose terms had expired. Brian Prescott of Sierra Vista, Arizona has been involved in various environmental organizations in the area including the Friends of the Huachuca Mountains, Huachuca Audubon, and Friends of the San Pedro River. Also joining the board is Alejandro Barcenas of the Arizona Department of Water Resources in Nogales, Arizona, who has considerable experience addressing regional water issues.

The SACF is intended to bring together community members, enabling the early and continued two-way flow of information, concerns, values, and needs between the USIBWC and the public, environmentalists, government agencies, municipalities, and other interested parties. SACF board members represent a variety of interests in the region. The board is co-chaired by John Light, Acting Nogales Project Manager for the USIBWC, and Ben Lomeli of the Friends of the Santa Cruz River.

A complete meeting agenda is attached. Members of the public who would like more information may call the USIBWC's Nogales Projects Office at 520-281-1832 or e-mail sallyspener@ibwc.state.gov.

For more information:

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SOUTHEAST ARIZONA CITIZENS' FORUM

Tuesday, August 30, 2005

4:00 - 6:00 p.m.

City Council Chambers

City of Bisbee

118 Arizona Street

Bisbee, AZ 85603

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions– John Light, USIBWC Acting Project Manager and Citizens' Forum Co-Chair
- Recent Stress and Die-off of Riparian Trees – Ann Phillips, President, Friends of the Santa Cruz River
- First Observed Zero Flow in the San Pedro River at the Charleston Gaging Station - Staff, U.S. Geological Survey
- Briefing on Response to Sulfuric Acid Spill in the Santa Cruz River - John Hays, Floodplain Coordinator, Santa Cruz County
- Public Comment
- Board Discussion

If you have a disability that you wish to self-identify confidentially that requires accommodation, please advise us ahead of time.

For more information, call 520-281-1832 or e-mail sallyspener@ibwc.state.gov